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Brief to Premier Peter Lougheed, Present
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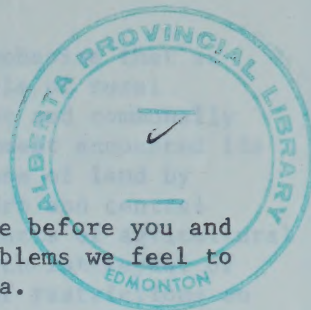


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PETER LOUGHEED

VULCAN DISTRICT CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

February 23, 1973; 1:30 P.M.



PREMIER LOUGHEED:

We have requested a meeting with you here today to place before you and the Government of the Province of Alberta, a number of problems we feel to be of great concern and importance to the people of Alberta.

We have chosen this dramatic approach for a number of reasons, the chief one being to identify to you and the government that the people of Alberta are vitally concerned over the ownership, use and sale of one of Alberta's principal, irreplaceable resources . . . her land. We feel that great care must be taken in use of this resource and far-reaching, well prepared legislation must be enacted to regulate land use in Alberta.

Why did we choose this method - a public demonstration - to express our feelings? Well, Mr. Premier, this method was chosen because of the critical time element. The Communal Property Act is slated for repeal March 1st. It is apparent that throughout the province large amounts of land have been secured by option for sale to communal corporations. Our fear is that the repeal of the Communal Property Act will precipitate unlimited expansion of these groups to the detriment of the majority of the citizens of rural Alberta, and we include towns, small cities and villages in the rural context.

That, Mr. Premier, is why we chose to demonstrate, by our presence here, to you and to the government, our sincere wish for more consideration in these and other land use matters before some irrevocable steps are taken.

Land use is a growing concern of civic, municipal and senior government, the farmer and businessman. Acquisition of land in this province by foreign and Canadian development corporations is growing daily. The Dennis report on low income housing revealed that a handful of corporate-developer-builders hold a near monopoly of land required for housing expansion in most major Canadian cities. For instance, the amount of land in Calgary held by developers - about 7,500 acres - is also the exact amount required by that city for development over the next 10 years.

There are many cases where large corporations control land surrounding cities which, over the next decade, will be required by those cities for further expansion. We suggest that the purchase price of this land at that time, will be extremely high for prospective individual home owners.

Mr. Premier - we are also concerned with farm land purchases by foreign and Canadian corporations and by other interests. In some instances these farms are operated by absentee land owners who merely plant, harvest and return home, thereby contributing little or nothing to the business and social life of the community. We are concerned also with the effect on the community, of extremely large family farms.

To this point then, Mr. Premier, we have identified in a general way, a number of problems of land ownership by corporate entities, and some private holdings in Alberta.

We will now focus on the problem which is the principal reason for these people being here before you today . . . I refer to communal land ownership.

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Mr. Premier, there is great concern - and I wish to emphasize that as strongly as possible - there is grave concern by the people of rural Alberta, about the proliferation and expansion of colonies and communally held property in this province. From the time the government announced its intention to remove the restrictions governing the purchase of land by communal groups, land agents and others throughout southern and central Alberta, have been actively acquiring options on large tracts of agricultural land for sale to the Hutterian Brethren following the March 1st repeal of the Communal Property Act. We are fearful that removal of restrictions on land purchase by communal groups will quickly lead to a monopoly ownership of the agricultural land in Alberta.

We think that because of the structure and organization of the Hutterian Brethren sect and their commitment to the communal living concept of life, there is the very real expectation of their being able, over time, to possess almost total ownership of agricultural land in Alberta. We are driven to that startling conclusion when it is considered that the total human element in the Hutterian Brethren sect seeks no other occupation than that of farming. Since all of their resources are totally directed towards the production of agricultural products and their people to farming, we can see that they must be continually purchasing more and more land to provide work for their members.

Mr. Premier - this situation is exerting tremendous pressure on every aspect of rural community life. We think the extent of ownership of land by communal groups for communal purposes in this province, has reached a maximum, and believe that freedom to buy land by these groups will eliminate small family farms in the near future.

In support of these statements we respectfully demand of you and the government:

1. That you delay the repeal of the Communal Property Act;
2. That you enact an immediate temporary land freeze affecting the sale of land to foreign corporations, Canadian Corporations, communal corporations and/or communal groups;
3. That you establish a land use commission encompassing a broad representation of Albertans to investigate in depth, land use in the province;
4. That because of a demonstrated and pressing concern over communal land use, a committee be struck which would investigate this problem in detail and be heard on the floor of the Legislature, time permitting, during the spring, 1974 sitting.

The government of Alberta must decide now, which social system is to prevail - that of the free enterprise, small family farm, which the government now advocates, or that of communal living.

Mr. Premier, on behalf of the people gathered here today and of those whose sympathies lie with this demonstration, I sincerely thank you for your consideration in granting us this opportunity to make our feelings known to you and through you, to the government.

We thank you.

